

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00  
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
AID-05 /067 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3247

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 0245

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, NS

SUBJ: SURINAM INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: DURING THE EIGHT DAYS SINCE PRIME MINISTER ARRON'S MARCH 17 PRESS CONFERENCE, NO CHANGE HAS TAKEN PLACE IN PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION. OPPOSITION HAS CONTINUED TO CLAIM THAT GOVERNMENT HAS LOST ITS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT AND SHOULD THEREFORE RESIGN. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE HAS BEEN THAT IT IS UP TO OPPOSITION TO PRODUCE A MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT TO UNSEAT GOVERNMENT. THE FACT IS THAT NEITHER SIDE WAS CONFIDENT OF WINNING AND WAS THEREFORE UNWILLING TO PRESS FOR A VOTE. BEHIND THE SCENES, NPK WAS MANEUVERING TO GET KTPI BACK INTO COMBINATION, WHICH HAS NOW APPARENTLY BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. PRO-GNOSTICATION IS THAT FULL COMBINATION WILL BE SHORTLY RESTORED AND SOMETHING LIKE ORIGINAL SCHEDULE WILL BRING ABOUT ELECTIONS THIS SUMMER. OUTCOME OF ELECTIONS WILL BE AFFECTED BY CORRUPTION SCANDALS BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHO WILL WIN.

1. DURING THE PAST WEEK PRIME MINISTER ARRON HAS CONTINUED TO HOLD THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT AND TO INSIST THAT THE DEFECTION  
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OF THE KTPI FROM THE GOVERNMENT COMBINATION DID NOT AUTOMATICALLY MEAN A LOSS OF THE COMBINATION'S MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT AND THAT THERE WAS NO REASON FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO RESIGN. OPPOSITION LEADER LACHMON, FOR HIS PART, HAS CONTINUED TO CALL FOR THE CABINET'S RESIGNATION AND FOR A PUBLIC SESSION OF PARLIAMENT TO DISCUSS THE POLITICAL SITUATION, BUT HE HAS NOT PRESSED BEYOND VERBAL FIREWORKS.

2. MEANWHILE, BEHIND THE SCENES, IT HAS BECOME EVIDENT THAT THE PARLIAMENTARY MEMBERS OF THE KTPI, AT LEAST, WONDER WHETHER THEY DID THE RIGHT THING BY BREAKING WITH ARRON AND HAVE INDICATED SOME DESIRE TO RETURN TO THE FOLD. FORMER AGRICULTURE MINISTER SOEMITA AND HIS FATHER, THE FOUNDER AND IN A CERTAIN SENSE THE SOLE PROPRIETOR OF THE KTPI, ARE FOR HOLDING OUT TO PUNISH ARRON FOR HIS ACTIONS AGAINST SOEMITA. EARLIER THIS WEEK LACHMON TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT HE THOUGHT ARRON WOULD SUCCEED IN "BUYING OUT" THE KTPI PARLIAMENT MEMBERS (PRESUMABLY WITH PROMISES OF CONTINUED ACCESS TO POLITICAL POWER) AND THAT THE SITUATION WOULD THEN STABILIZE. ARRON CONFIRMED TO EMBASSY MARCH 25 THAT HE HAD INDEED SUCCEEDED IN GETTING KTPI TO RETURN AND EXPECTED A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT WITHIN THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS. PRESIDENT FERRIER ALSO TOLD THE EMBASSY THIS WEEK THAT ARRON WAS "WHEELING AND DEALING AS CALLAGHAN HAD DONE WITH THE LIBERALS IN LONDON" AND WOULD COME THROUGH THE CRISIS ALL RIGHT.

3. ASSUMING ALL OF THESE LEADERS, WHO OUGHT TO KNOW, ARE RIGHT, THE PARLIAMENTARY STATUS QUO ANTE WILL SHORTLY BE RESTORED AND BUSINESS WILL RESUME. FIRST ON THE AGENDA WILL BE PASSAGE OF A LAW SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT BUREAU TO SUPERVISE THE ELECTIONS, AS PROVIDED FOR BY THE CONSTITUTION, DEMANDED BY THE OPPOSITION AND PREVIOUSLY STALLED BY THE CABINET. ARRON ALSO HOPES TO PASS THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE LAW WHICH HAS BEEN UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR SOMETIME AND SAID THAT HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO GET PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL FOR A SETTLEMENT WITH FRANCE OF THE BORDER DISPUTE BETWEEN SURINAM AND FRENCH GUIANA.

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ONCE THESE THINGS ARE OUT OF THE WAY (OR PROVE TO BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCOMPLISH EXPEDITIOUSLY) IT IS EXPECTED THAT ARRON WILL DISOLVE PARLIAMENT, PROBABLY AROUND MAY 1, AND SET ELECTIONS FOR LATE JULY OR EARLY AUGUST.

4. THE FALL OF SOEMITA AND OTHER SCANDALS (A NPS MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT MAY SOON BE ARRESTED) WILL SURELY AFFECT THE ATTITUDE OF THE VOTERS THIS SUMMER, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW. THE OPPOSITION THEME WILL BE THAT THE SCANDALS RUB OFF ON THE ENTIRE GOVERNING COMBINATION AND THEY WILL ADD THIS FACTOR TO THEIR COMPLAINTS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT, INFLATION AND THE SCARCITY OF COMMODITIES. ARRON WILL PROBABLY TAKE THE STAND THAT HE PURSUED THE IDEAL OF CLEAN GOVERNMENT EVEN TO THE LENGTH OF DISCHARGING A MINISTER AND RISKING THE LOSS OF THAT MINISTER'S PARTY IN PARLIAMENT, SHOWING NOT ONLY THAT HE WAS AGAINST CORRUPTION BUT THAT HE WAS DETERMINED TO ROOT IT OUT OF HIS GOVERNMENT. WHICH ARGUMENT WILL SWAY THE VOTERS MORE IS ANYONE'S GUESS. THERE IS ALSO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE INDONESIAN VOTERS, A SIGNIFICANT MINORITY WHO MIGHT DECIDE THE

ISSUE, WILL STICK WITH THE KTPI OUT OF PREVIOUS LOYALTY OR WILL GO TO THE NEW INDONESIAN PARTY ORGANIZED BY PARLIAMENT MEMBER SOMOHARDJO (A FORMER NPS-ER) ALLIED WITH LACHMON. BOTH LACHMON AND ARRON, IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBASSY, HAVE EXPRESSED STRONG CONFIDENCE THAT THEY WILL WIN THE ELECTION, BUT NEITHER EXPECTING TO DO SO BY MORE THAN A COUPLE OF SEATS. LACHMON'S MAIN HOPE, THAT THE COMBINATION WOULD SPLIT AND THAT THE COMBINATION PARTIES WOULD THEN HAVE TO RUN INDIVIDUALLY, THUS COMPETING AMONG THEMSELVES APPEARS NOW VERY UNLIKELY TO BE FULFILLED. HOWEVER, THERE ARE STILL SOME MONTHS AHEAD BEFORE THE ELECTIONS, THE CAMPAIGN WILL BE FOUGHT HARD AND IT REMAINS AN OPEN QUESTION WHO WILL WIN.  
ZURHELLEN

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